

# Water Horizons

Spring - Summer 2006

## Valley Water Alliance Update

### Dear VWA Friends and Supporters,

It seems the last few months have been filled with promises, negotiations and more promises. All while I am constantly reminded about the ongoing struggle our valley has to meet the future water needs of our community, region and the state as a whole. I remain amazed at how the state legislature can once again ask the valley to take a backseat to the rest of the state's infrastructure needs.

As we watched an incredible amount of water being released from Friant Dam in late spring, we were in a battle with the state legislature to provide surface water storage in the infrastructure bond proposals. Our valley delegation held the line and stood together across party lines to demand surface water storage be included. Their bi-partisan efforts and the efforts of Valley Water Alliance members detained the infrastructure bond fight.

Regrettably when the state assembly and senate reconvened after their spring recess a new package of infrastructure bond bills were introduced which completely excluded surface water storage from the discussion. This forced VWA directors, supporters and our valley representatives to fight another uphill battle just to see if we could get water storage back on the table for discussion. The battle was fought; but unfortunately, in the end we saw our valley delegation forced to divide their loyalties. As it now stands, the Central Valley has no hope of advancing new surface water storage or water conservation measures as part of the November infrastructure bond package.

Additionally, we are being asked to lend our support to the Governor's November infrastructure bond proposal as drafted, with the promise of his full support for new surface water storage for the valley when and if he is reelected in November 2006. We have been told time and time again, the Governor will aggressively support and campaign for a new reservoir to meet our needs for a safe and reliable water supply for our region.

It is my opinion we should not lend support to any activities supporting the November bond measures and in fact seriously consider opposing because surface storage was omitted. I don't think we have anything to lose. We were successful in stopping an initial effort to place bonds on the November ballot, with all kinds of promises made by political leaders that this omission would not be repeated. There was an understanding of how important this issue was to the Central Valley. We rejoiced in the fact so many officials in Sacramento espoused the need for surface water storage. And then we were sold down the river, so to speak.

Now we are in another fight, a fight courageously being led by Senator

Denham and our valley legislators with Senate Bill 902, which would generate \$1.2 billion for the construction of a new reservoir on the upper San Joaquin River. This recognition by Senator Denham and our valley delegation is only half the battle. We must work with them to help the remaining legislators and the Governor realize the valley is an integral part of the State's economy and must be supported with improvements in surface water storage, as well as, roads, schools, etc.

We have another round of promises from the Governor and silence from others. Our ability to pass a statewide bond on our own is very suspect. Our willingness to accept promises from those that may not be in leadership positions next year is wrong. Those who are silent have what they want. Those making promises are those who have made promises. Our leverage is the existing bond measures, the rhetoric describing the limited scope for our Valley, and Senator Denham's measure that may or may not see the light of day.

What makes us think elected officials to the north and south will entertain a Valley bond when they already ignored our needs not once, but twice? What makes us think that the voters of this state will trek to the polls again to vote on yet another initiative again in another year – let alone vote in favor of the measure?

Our best hope is a package everyone has a vested interest in passing. A very preliminary, cursory review of polling results indicates voters of this state recognize more water must be made available to a growing population. The voter's reasons in all parts of the state may be different, but the solution is the same. We need a safe and clean water supply, which meets the future needs of our state. And if we are to meet that need, we must start now, without delay.

I don't believe we should give up the fight. I don't believe we should compromise for a promise. I don't believe our odds are great for success but I do believe they are even less at a later date. However, we will not succeed without the continued unity and support of the Valley Water Alliance. Our directors, friends, and loyal supporters are the faces of the fight to put our state back on track. We must join with our elected officials in getting the recognition that the Central Valley deserves as an integral part of California with infrastructure and water supply needs that must be met. It is important to us, and all of California.

**Joel Nelsen**  
**President, The Valley Water Alliance**

## **Feinstein and Radanovich Continue to Seek Resolution**

One of the greatest reasons we need to continue our fight for surface water storage in the Central Valley is to meet the needs of future San Joaquin River restoration while continuing to meet the needs of farmers and municipalities that depend on this same water supply. To that end, we must look to the future and realize our current conservation measures must continue to grow while we fight to expand our area's water supplies. The efforts of Senator Feinstein and Congressman Radanovich to bring a resolution through negotiation of an 18-year lawsuit against current users of Friant water supplies that come from the San Joaquin River are to be applauded, and it appears that a settlement is near. More on this will be announced after the parties go back into court with the framework of a deal on Monday, June 19.

The VWA appreciates the efforts of those involved in settlement discussions to find an acceptable resolution to this long-running litigation, and we

look forward to working with all parties in implementing a solution that recognizes the social, cultural and economic concerns of the valley. VWA will alert our supporters of any settlement announcement as soon as it is made.

## **Upper San Joaquin River Basin Storage Investigation**

A public meeting and open house was held by the Bureau of Reclamation on Tuesday, June 13, 2006 in Fresno. The Bureau is currently conducting an investigation of the Upper San Joaquin River for potential new storage opportunities. Geological drilling and aggregate sampling will also be a part of the ongoing studies related to the project.

The public meeting was held to discuss the program's schedule and activities, which are scheduled for completion in 2009. Additional public input and review of the project will occur as the study progresses. VWA encourages your participation.

### **Join VWA in Our Outreach Efforts**

The Alliance encourages you to continue your efforts in educating and advocating your friends, neighbors, business associates, community groups and elected officials. Without reaching out and telling our story we will not be able to make a difference as the fight for a reliable water supply continues.

Please contact the Valley Water Alliance at [info@valleywateralliance.org](mailto:info@valleywateralliance.org) if you have any questions or need additional information. To be placed on the Alliance's mailing list, or to provide edits or submissions for our monthly newsletter please contact Alfreda Sebasto at [info@valleywateralliance.org](mailto:info@valleywateralliance.org) or call 559-291-0184.

*Please contact the Valley Water Alliance at [info@valleywateralliance.org](mailto:info@valleywateralliance.org) if you have any questions or need additional information. To be placed on the Alliance's mailing list, or to provide edits or submissions for our monthly newsletter please contact Alfreda Sebasto at [info@valleywateralliance.org](mailto:info@valleywateralliance.org) or call 559-291-0184.*

